

Thanjavur Marathi dialect

Thanjavur Marathi (Marathi: तंजावूर मराठी), also commonly spelled as **Tanjore Marathi**, is a dialect of Marathi spoken by Thanjavur Maharashtrians who migrated south, along with Shivaji's half brother Venkoji, to the areas surrounding the city of Thanjavur in India, back in the 17th century.^{[1][2]}

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Thanjavur Marathi	
Native to	India
Region	Tamil Nadu
Native speakers	100,000
Language family	<div>Indo-European<ul style="list-style-type: none">Indo-Iranian<ul style="list-style-type: none">Indo-Aryan<ul style="list-style-type: none">Southern Zone<ul style="list-style-type: none">Marathi<ul style="list-style-type: none">Thanjavur Marathi</div>
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	—

History

The history of Maratha rulers in South India possibly begins with Shahaji's attempt at setting up an independent kingdom in the Deccan plateau and his subsequent defeat in battle by Shahjahan around 1636. Shahaji made peace with Shahjahan and was posted in the deep south so as not to pose any challenge to Mughals. He finally became one of the top generals in the Adilshah's army, accepting a Jahagir in his court, being based in Bangalur (Present day Bangalore in Karnataka). Shahaji had two sons by Jijabai, Sambhaji and Shivaji. He also had one son Venkoji (aka Vyankoji or Ekoji) by his second wife, Tukabai. Venkoji later ruled over the independent Maratha kingdom of Thanjavur which came to be known as the Thanjavur Maratha kingdom. Serfoji I Maharaja was one of the most famous Marathi kings of Tanjore.^[3]

The language spoken by this community, also known as "*Thanjavur Marathi*", is a scholarly dialect far removed from the present day Marathi - it is stuck in the 17th century and is old Marathi. There are an estimated 100,000 people who speak the dialect. The various dialects of the language since its establishment are Kumbakonam and Namdev, each mutually intelligible with the other. There is some admixture of Tamil and almost all Thanjavur Marathi speakers are fluent in Tamil. Recent mass migration of people to major cities has diluted the language and it is now mostly spoken exclusively at home or with older generations.^[4]

Vocabulary and Dravidian influence

Tanjāvuri Marathi (TM) as spoken today can at best be described as a dialect of Marathi. It has a considerably smaller vocabulary. A quick estimate indicates that TM has around 4,000 words, as compared to over 40,000 words in Marathi. TM has several words which have since disappeared from or gone out of fashion/ usage in Marathi. In addition, several words and usages from the major languages of the Southern India, (mostly Tamil) have got into TM. Despite these changes, almost all the words of TM exist as they are

in Marathi. The major differences between TM and Marathi can be traced to pronunciation, inflection, syntax and grammar. Historically, TM took a totally different route in its evolution over the past 250 years, influenced by the Dravidian languages and customs. TM had hardly used devanagari script. Instead the archaic modi script was used by the early TM speakers. Usage of modi script was given up gradually, until as of today, the dialect is left with no script. Without the benefit of a written reference standard, each succeeding generation of TM speakers is being bequeathed a dialect with ever increasing degeneration in pronunciation and inflection. There is an urgent need to arrest this trend by introducing devanagari script and standardizing the dialect.^[5]

Though it is believed by many that TM is influenced by Tamil, it is actually an early form of Marathi that was spoken in Maharashtra three centuries ago. In Tamil Nadu, it has remained insulated from the influence of 'related' languages and has therefore to a larger degree retained its original form. If the pure form of TM, as spoken by a few traditional families is taken into consideration, there are no Tamil words in it at all. Certain words such as *kavāD* for door, are used in Maharashtra not directly for door but in phrases like *dnyānachi kawāDe ughaDi dzhāli* (meaning 'The doors of knowledge opened.'), while *kavāD* is commonly used in Tanjore Marathi for 'door'.

The community which probably started the migration towards the South around the early 1600s with the movement of the Maratha armies towards the South, had managed to keep the language alive, is now fighting a losing battle. The grammar is remarkably like English where most objects are referred in the neutral gender. example *kutra āla* 'the dog came' is used for the male and female versions of the dog. Colloquial Marathi however refers to the masculine as *kutrā ālā* and to the feminine as *kutri āli*. In modern age, Shri. Ananda Rao Vashisht has been writing about TM language, he has made great contribution in preserving TM language. His works on Tanjore Marathi are available in www.vishnughar.blogspot.com and www.vishnugharforum.blogspot.com. Also, Smt. Kamal Sridhar prof. At Stonybrook univ New York has written papers, she has been active on Facebook Tanjavur Marathi Group.

Scripts

Historically Modi, Devanagari and Tamil, Telugu scripts have been used to write this dialect as found in old historical documents.

Speakers

The community or the social group which speaks this dialect is now spread all over Southern India and elsewhere. Tanjavur District in Tamil Nadu can no longer lay claim to having the largest number of the community with it. It is estimated that less than 15% of the TM speaking population now lives in Tanjavur. The vast majority of TM speakers who live elsewhere have no connection with Tanjavur.

It's deceptive similarity to the Saurashtra language suggests a common Indo-Iranian root. The people's eventual assimilation into the Tamil community resulted in a unique culture which retains elements of both cultures and religious beliefs. Although members of this community have spread around the world today, the vast majority are still scattered throughout India with a concentration in and around South India, in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Most people of this community can trace their lineage back to the 17th century Maratha Empire. However this community is spread across the entire South India from about Masulipatnam in the Northeast of Andhra Pradesh, to Tirunelveli in the South of Tamil Nadu, to Tiruvananthapuram in Kerala to parts of Northern Karnataka. Divided by sects, the only common factor is the dying common language which the current generation is slowly losing to the local languages. In the modern age, there are very popular ethnic and cultural groups under the name of "Tanjavur Marathi Group" started by Shri. Ravi Shelvankar which has more than 2000 worldwide members on Facebook focused to integrate Tanjavur Marathi members worldwide, retain its identity, culture and dialect <http://www.deshasthas.org> (non-profit

organization). The Mahratta Education Fund (MEF) is a non-profit organization working for the educational advancement and economic amelioration of the South Indian Marathi speaking community. Towards this objective, MEF awards scholarships to deserving South Indian Marathi speaking boys and girls to pursue their higher education. The Maharatta Education Fund was started in the year 1912 by a group of people headed by Sri E. Vinayaka Rao, with a view to bringing together the South Indian Maharastrians.

Illustration

Examples of colloquial speech

Tanjore Marathi	Standard Marathi(colloquial)	Translation
namaśkāra	namaskār	hello/greetings
kaśa āhēnta/āhēsa/hāysa?	kase/kasa ahāt/ āhēs/āhāt?	How are you?
mī bēs hāy	mī ṭhīk āhē	I am fine
lai (pronounced as 'lie') bēs (pronounced as 'base') hāy (pronounced as 'haai')	khoop chhān āhē	(It) is very nice/beautiful.
hōy ki nai?	hō kā nāhi?	yes or no?
tumchya gharāt kewda pōri hāyt?	tumchya ghari kiti mulee āhēt?	How many girls are there in your house (at the moment)?
ghaṇṭā kewda jhālāy/hōlēy?	kiti wājalē?	What is the time?
yejā/hecha mōl kewda ?	hyāchaa bhaav kaay?	How much is this for?
dāwa/ujwa pāṭīs	ḍāwyā/ujawyā bājū lā	toward left/right
kemma/kevva panā	kadhihī	always,whenever
rāndhthēghar / sampakkholi	swayampāk ghar	kitchen
bāsna	bhāndee	vessels
ruppēcha	chāndīcha	made of silver
kānkna	bāngdyaa	bangles
dhādu?	pāthavu?	should i send?
Nankaar	NankhBhar	a little bit,small amount,a pinch
Vijana	Pankha	Handfan
Dhonda	Dagad	Large Stone

See also

Native Tanjore Marathi speakers have begun to revive the language. Such efforts can be studied at a few websites mentioned herein-below.

Link	Contents
http://tanjavurmarathi.podomatic.com/	A project to record the Tanjore Marathi language by the local speakers
http://vishnughar.blogspot.in/	A project to collect the words from South Indian Marathi language and compile a dictionary
http://vishnugharforum.blogspot.in/	A project to write in Tanjore Marathi dialect

References

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2. "Marathi identity, with Tamil flavour" (<https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/marathi-identity-with-tamil-flavour-2790955/>). *The Indian Express*. 9 May 2016. Retrieved 4 January 2019.
3. Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20070927003724/http://www.sarasvatimahallibrary.tn.nic.in/Thanjavur/Maratha_Rulers/body_maratha_rulers.html#serfoji2) 27 September 2007 at the Wayback Machine
4. Dakshini Marathi (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MkDzN5759Q>) on YouTube
5. Dakshini Marathi-not standardised (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gEcXKO9OGWU>) on YouTube

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